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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 000527

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STATE FOR NEA/ARPI, LONDON FOR TSOU, PARIS FOR ZEYA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EPET](#) [KU](#) [NATIONAL ASSEMBLY](#)

FREEOM AGENDA

SUBJECT: CABINET MINISTER OUTLINES GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES AS PRESS LAW, PROJECT KUWAIT, PRIVATIZATION

REF: A. 05 KUWAIT 5266

[B. 05 KUWAIT 5186](#) AND PREVIOUS  
[C. 05 KUWAIT 5083](#)  
[D. 04 KUWAIT 2816](#)

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reason 1.4 (d)

[11.](#) (C) The Ambassador met on February 14 with Mohammed Dhaifallah Sharar to congratulate him on his re-appointment as Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs.

Confirming what local media and post contacts have reported, Sharar said Government priorities were passage of Project Kuwait (ref A), the Press and Publications Law (ref C), and the privatization law (ref D). He was optimistic that all three would pass, specifically, Project Kuwait, which he said only "six to seven" members of Parliament (MPs) opposed. Sharar told the Ambassador the Government had asked Parliament to hold one session to vote on all "international conventions" waiting to be ratified, including Kuwait's \$500 million pledge to hurricane Katrina victims and the United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) Status of Mission Agreement (SOMA).

[12.](#) (C) The Minister also said the GOK would introduce a new proposal before April to reduce the number of electoral constituencies from 25 to 10, a key political reform (ref B).

He noted, however, that while there was consensus on the need for the reduction, MPs differed considerably on the geographic distribution of the fewer districts, which could have potentially significant political ramifications.

(Comment: With Government support, Parliament voted in December to postpone discussion of proposals to reduce the number of electoral constituencies until June 30, effectively killing the issue until the 2006-2007 parliamentary term (ref B). It is unlikely the Government would introduce a new proposal before then, especially amidst sharp divisions in Parliament about this reform. End note.)

[13.](#) (C) Sharar said the "recent phase consolidated democracy (in Kuwait) in a clear manner," and expressed hope that this would result in improved Government-Parliament cooperation. He dismissed Kuwaiti liberals' complaints about being excluded from the new Cabinet as "normal for the losing party." "Ultimately, though, we accept constructive criticism," he said. Sharar also asked the Ambassador about the status of Kuwaiti Guantanamo detainees and USG policy on Iran.

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LeBaron